

BAFFLE FOR DEEP FRYER HEAT EXCHANGER

INTRODUCTION

The present invention relates to a deep fryer, and more particularly, to an improved baffle for a deep fryer heat exchanger.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Deep fryers are commercially used by restaurants, institutional kitchens, and fast food establishments for cooking a variety of food products, such as french fries, fish, fried chicken, and the like. The food product is cooked by totally immersing it within a vat or tank that is filled with heated oil or shortening. The oil may be heated using a flow of heated gas that is forced or drawn through a heat exchanger having flow passages that are located within or external to the cooking vat. A gas burner is provided to heat the gas circulating within the heat exchanger. Baffles, such as spiral baffles and disc baffles, have been known to be provided within the flow passages of heat exchangers to increase the turbulent flow of gas and enhance heat transfer.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a baffle for a deep fryer which reduces or wholly overcomes some or all of the difficulties inherent in prior known devices. Particular objects and advantages of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art, that is, those who are knowledgeable or experienced in this field of technology, in view of the following disclosure of the invention and detailed description of certain preferred embodiments.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The principles of the invention may be used to advantage to provide a baffle for the heat exchanger of a fryer system which can improve the heat transfer from heated gas flowing through heat transfer conduits of the heat exchanger to shortening contained within a vat.

In accordance with a first aspect, a heat exchanger for a fryer system has at least one heat transfer conduit having a heating fluid passing therethrough. A baffle plate is disposed within the at least one heat transfer conduit and defines a plane. The baffle plate has a first surface, an opposed second surface, and a longitudinal axis dividing the baffle plate into a first portion and a second portion. Each of a plurality of tabs has a longitudinal axis and extends outwardly away from one of the first and second surfaces. The intersection of the tab and the baffle plate defines a crease. At least one of the tabs is positioned in the first portion of the baffle plate and at least one of the tabs is positioned in the second portion of the baffle plate. A plurality of webs are provided with each web separating a tab from other tabs adjacent in a direction substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the tab.

In accordance with another aspect, a baffle for a heat exchanger has at least one heat transfer conduit with a heating fluid passing therethrough. A baffle plate is positioned in the at least one heat transfer conduit and defines a plane. The baffle plate has a first surface, an opposed second surface, and a longitudinal axis dividing the baffle plate into a first portion and a second portion. Each tab of a plurality of rows of tabs is formed of a portion of the baffle plate bent outwardly from one of the first and second surfaces. Each tab has a longitudinal axis, and defines a crease along an intersection of the tab and the baffle plate. At least one tab in each row is positioned in the first portion of the baffle

plate, and at least one tab in each row is positioned in the second portion of the baffle plate. Each row has the crease of all of its tabs form an acute angle with one of a portion of a longitudinal edge of the baffle plate which is upstream, with respect to the flow of heating fluid, of the main body of its respective tab and a portion of the longitudinal edge which is downstream, with respect to the flow of heating fluid of the main body of its respective tab. The rows adjacent to the each row have the crease of all of their tabs form an acute angle with the other of a portion of a longitudinal edge of the baffle plate which is upstream, with respect to the flow of heating fluid, of the main body of its respective tab and a portion of the longitudinal edge which is downstream, with respect to the flow of heating fluid, of the main body of its respective tab. Each web of a plurality of webs separates a tab from another tab adjacent the tab in a direction substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the tab. The crease of at least one tab is directly downstream, with respect to the flow of heating fluid, of the web between two other tabs which are adjacent and upstream of the at least one tab. The number of tabs per unit length increases along the baffle plate in a downstream direction with respect to the flow of heating fluid.

From the foregoing disclosure, it will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, that is, those who are knowledgeable or experienced in this area of technology, that the present invention provides a significant technological advance. Preferred embodiments of the baffle for a deep fryer heat exchanger can provide increased turbulence and enhanced heat transfer within the flow passages of the heat exchanger. These and additional features and advantages of the invention disclosed here will be further understood from the following detailed disclosure of certain preferred embodiments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Certain preferred embodiments are described in detail below with reference to the appended drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a schematic perspective view of a gas fryer containing a heat exchanger according to the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic perspective view of the heat exchanger shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a schematic perspective view of a baffle according to the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a schematic section view, showing the baffle of FIG. 3 placed within a heat transfer tube of FIG. 2;

FIG. 5 is a schematic plan view, shown in section, of a plurality of baffles placed within a heat transfer tube of FIG. 2;

FIGS. 6-9 are schematic elevation views illustrating various embodiments of the baffle of FIG. 3;

FIG. 10 is a schematic plan view, shown in section, of an alternative embodiment of the baffle of FIG. 5; and

FIG. 11 is a schematic perspective view of the perimeter plate of FIG. 10.

The figures referred to above are not drawn necessarily to scale and should be understood to present a representation of the invention, illustrative of the principles involved. Some features of the baffle depicted in the drawings have been enlarged or distorted relative to others to facilitate explanation and understanding. The same reference numbers are used in the drawings for similar or identical components and features shown in various alternative embodiments. Baffles, as disclosed herein, will have configurations and compo-

nents determined, in part, by the intended application and environment in which they are used.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring to FIG. 1, a gas fryer according to the present invention is shown generally by reference numeral 10. The gas fryer preferably includes a plurality of vats 12 for holding the shortening, oil, or other cooking medium, a heat exchanger 14 for heating the shortening in each vat 12, a burner section 11 for heating the fluid flowing through heat exchanger 14, and may include a blower motor in blower housing 13 for drawing the heated fluid through heat exchanger 14. Due to its efficiency and economic availability, the heat exchange fluid generally used in the present invention and in prior art gas fryers is air; however, other gaseous fluids or liquids may of course also be considered as the development thereof permits. In the preferred embodiment of FIG. 2, heat exchanger 14 includes a plurality of heat transfer conduits or tubes 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 and two mixing plenums 32, 34. The direction of travel of the heated fluid through heat exchanger 14 is schematically illustrated in FIG. 2 to show the heated fluid entering the vat through inlet heat transfer tubes 16, 18, 20, mixing in plenum 32, passing through heat transfer tubes 22, 24, 26, mixing in plenum 34, and then exiting the vat through outlet heat transfer tubes 28, 30. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, gas fryer 10 includes a vat 12 having internal dimensions of 20"x20", 18"x18", or 14"x14", although any other desired dimensions could also be used. Heat exchanger 14 is therefore correspondingly sized to be disposed within vat 12. A further description of the heat exchanger is provided in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,417,202 and 5,706,717, assigned on their faces to America's Favorite Chicken Company (AFC), the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

A baffle plate 40 having a longitudinal axis L is shown in FIG. 3. Plate 40 has a plurality of tabs 42 extending outwardly from each of first surface 43 and second surface 45 of plate 40. Tabs 42 preferably extend outwardly at an acute angle with respect to the surface from which they extend. More preferably, tabs 42 extend outwardly at an angle of 45° with respect to the surface from which they extend. Each tab 42 has a longitudinal axis A which is perpendicular to crease 44. In a preferred embodiment, each tab 42 is formed by cutting plate 40 and bending a portion of plate 40 outwardly, forming crease 44 at the joint where tab 42 is bent away from plate 40. Although tabs 42 may be formed by securing separate pieces of material to plate 40, such as by welding, in which case crease 44 would extend along the line of intersection of tab 42 and plate 40, forming tabs 42 by bending a portion of plate 40 outwardly removes the welds as a potential point of failure of plate 40. Web 46 is the portion of plate 40 which remains between tabs 42 adjacent to one another in a direction substantially perpendicular to longitudinal axis A. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 3, where the planes of first surface 43 and second surface 45 lie in a vertical plane, web 46 is between two vertically adjacent tabs 42. It is to be appreciated that plate 40 may be oriented in a different manner and that web 46 would lie between adjacent tabs in a direction other than vertical. It is also to be appreciated that tabs 42 may have a shape other than the substantially rectangular shape shown in FIG. 2, e.g., circular, oval, or any other suitable shape which will become obvious to those skilled in the art given the benefit of this disclosure.

As seen in FIG. 4, plate 40 is positioned in heat transfer tube 16. Although the discussion that follows deals primarily

with heat transfer tube 16, it is to be appreciated that a plate 40 may also be placed in some, or all, of the remaining heat transfer tubes 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30. Plate 40 is oriented within heat transfer tube 16 such that its longitudinal axis L (not shown here as it extends into the paper) extends substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of heat transfer tube 16 and the direction of flow of heated air through heat transfer tube 16. As the heated air flows through heat transfer tube 16 it is deflected by tabs 42, increasing the turbulence of the flow within heat transfer tube 16, illustrated by the arrows B shown in FIG. 3. The increased turbulence in heat transfer tube 16 thereby enhances the heat transfer from the heated air, through heat transfer tube 16, to the shortening in the vat. Plate 40 is preferably resting within heat transfer tube 16 as opposed to being secured thereto, such as by welding, in order to reduce the stresses on heat transfer tube 16. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 4, heat transfer tube 16 has an oblong, or obround cross section. It is to be noted that heat transfer tube 16 may have a circular cross section, or any other suitably shaped cross section.

As illustrated in the embodiment shown in FIG. 3, plate 40 is oriented such that the leading edge of each tab 42, that is, the edge that is upstream with respect to the flow of heated air through heat transfer tube 16 (flowing into the paper as seen in FIG. 3), is the outermost edge of tab 42 with respect to plate 40. Correspondingly, in this embodiment, the trailing edge of each tab 42, that is, the edge that is downstream with respect to the flow of heated air through heat transfer tube 16, is crease 44 where tab 42 joins plate 40. Conversely, plate 40 may be oriented so that its leading and trailing edges are reversed, that is, the leading edge will be crease 44 and the trailing edge will be the outermost edge of tab 42 with respect to plate 40. In either orientation, the outwardly extending tabs 42 serve to deflect the heated air flowing through heat transfer tube 16 increasing turbulence and enhancing heat transfer. Thus, crease 44 of each tab 42 is one of upstream or downstream, with respect to the flow of heating fluid, of the main body of its tab 42. In certain preferred embodiments plate 40 may have one or more tabs 42 oriented such that their leading edge is crease 44 and one or more tabs oriented such that their trailing edge is crease 44.

In certain preferred embodiments, a firebox (not shown) housing the flame produced by the burning gas is provided in burner section 11. In other preferred embodiments, there is no firebox and the flame extends directly into a single heat transfer tube 16, preferably having a circular cross section. In embodiments without a firebox, tabs 42 of plates 40 enable more complete combustion by causing better mixing of the gas and air within the single heat transfer tube 16. Additionally, where three or more plates 40 are positioned within heat transfer tube 16, the centermost plates, which reach higher temperatures since they are further from the lower temperature shortening contained in the vat, can improve combustion by reheating cool air which is introduced to the mixture. Tabs 42 and plates 40 can also increase heat transfer through radiation. Such an embodiment is shown in FIG. 5, where a plurality of plates 40 are placed in heat transfer tube 16. Plates are preferably secured to one another by cross members 48. The number and placement and size of tabs 42 associated with each plate 40 can vary, depending on the flow characteristics that are desired for that particular heat transfer tube. For example, in the case where heated air is flowing from left to right in the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 5, tabs 42 are oriented in such a manner to direct the heated air primarily from the center towards the walls of heat transfer tube 16 to improve heat transfer at the